



SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY
MADRID

PHIL 2050 M05: ETHICS
Spring 2018

Class Days and Time: TR, 16:00-17:15

Classroom: Padre Rubio Hall, 3

Prerequisite(s): PHIL 1050

Credits: 3

Instructor: Bernhard Obsieger, Ph.D.

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Instructor's Campus Phone: 91 554 5858 ext. 229

Office: San Ignacio Hall, room 315

Office Hours: TR, 18:50-19:50

Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the fundamental problems of ethics by way of the study of selected classical texts. It focuses on the normative dimension of morality and in particular on the question of how to understand the foundation and nature of moral demands. Two alternative positions are discussed in detail, namely, that of consequentialism and that of deontology. The former claims that actions are good or bad in view of the goodness or badness of their effects or consequences. In contrast, according to the deontological view actions are good or bad in themselves due to their very nature as actions of a certain form or kind. Both consequentialism and deontology are divided into two different versions each, and the resulting four ethical theories are discussed studying four texts in which they have found their classical expression. In addition, the course includes a detailed analysis of a fifth classical text dealing with the relation between morality and self-interest, a topic closely related to the central problem of normative ethics.

Course Goals and Student Learning Outcomes:

The main objective of the course is to acquire a philosophical understanding of morality and of morality's role within human life. Such an understanding consists to a great extent in a familiarity with the fundamental questions related to morality. This requires an acquaintance with a series of essential distinctions and notions by which philosophers have tried to articulate the structures belonging to the sphere of ethics. Another important objective of the course is that of acquiring skills and practice in philosophical thinking and in theoretical and practical reasoning. Finally, the student also shall acquire some systematic and historical knowledge of ethics as an academic

philosophical discipline and of the most important contributions to and debates within that discipline.

If you complete successfully this course, you will have achieved the following learning-outcomes:

(1) You will possess systematic (problem-based) and historical knowledge of the main problems of moral philosophy. Firstly, you will have studied four central ethical theories concerning the morality of action (normative ethics) and the classical texts in which they were presented by philosophers such as Mill, Kant, Moore, and Ross. Secondly, you will have acquired an understanding of the personal dimension of morality on which focus classical virtue ethics developed by Plato and Aristotle.

(2) You will have acquired skills in analyzing and interpreting philosophical and other texts. You will be acquainted with a number of important typical thought-patterns; you will have improved your capacity of making relevant distinctions; you will be more familiar with conceptual thinking; and you will have improved your abilities in several areas of reasoning. Furthermore, you will deepen your ability to look at a question from different angles and adopt different points of view.

(3) You will be able to apply your knowledge to the moral problems with which you are confronted in everyday life. This does not necessarily make you a better person, but it does offer a clarity that can avoid many pitfalls and misunderstandings.

These learning-outcomes are not only of importance for your intellectual development but also for your existence in general, insofar as human existence involves a reason-guided relation toward the way you live your life.

Saint Louis University - Madrid Campus is committed to excellent and innovative educational practices. In order to maintain quality academic offerings and to conform to relevant accreditation requirements, the Campus regularly assesses its teaching, services, and programs for evidence of student learning outcomes achievement. For this purpose anonymized representative examples of student work from all courses and programs is kept on file, such as assignments, papers, exams, portfolios, and results from student surveys, focus groups, and reflective exercises. *Thus, copies of student work for this course, including written assignments, in-class exercises, and exams may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes.* If students prefer that Saint Louis University - Madrid Campus does not keep their work on file, they need to communicate their decision in writing to the professor.

Required text:

George Sher (ed.), *Ethics: Essential Readings in Moral Theory*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2012, available at the campus bookstore.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory. More than three absences (in all but the most exceptional cases) will have

direct negative impact on the grade for participation. More than six absences (regardless of the reason) will result in the loss of a grade point (from B to C, for example). More than ten absences (regardless of the reason) will result in not passing the class. Lateness may have negative impact on the participation grade; missing more than twenty minutes will be counted as absence.

Course Requirements and Grading Rationale/System:

Course requirements

The most basic requirement is that of studying the mandatory texts and (at least) one of the additional texts specified in the program. There will be two exams (midterm and final), a short paper (approx. 3 pages double spaced), and occasional announced and unannounced quizzes. These quizzes will count for the grade for participation (see below). The paper will consist either in a summary of one of the “additional texts” (see the program) or in a comparative study of such an “additional text” in its relation to the corresponding text from the seven mandatory readings. Guidelines for the papers will be provided separately.

Note on missed quizzes: If you miss one announced quiz, the points of the worst of your other quizzes will be counted twice. If you miss a second announced quiz (for whatever reason), its points will be counted as “zero”. Missing unannounced quizzes will simply count as a missed class.

Grading

The midterm exam will count 30 %, the final exam 35 %, participation (including quizzes and work in the classroom) 20 %, and the paper 15 %.

The deadline for handing in the papers is Tuesday, march 13. A delay will have negative consequences (normally in proportion with the delay) for the grade received for the paper.

Etiquette

- You are kindly requested to contribute to a good atmosphere for study and dialogue
- No use of mobile (cell) phones
- Please do not arrive late
- Please do not disturb the class by leaving the room and returning during the class period
- Laptops are to be used exclusively for taking class notes (very important)
- No eating or drinking in the classroom
- Normally there should be talking only one person at a time

E-mail: Campus and course announcements will often be handled by e-mail. Students should check their "@slu.edu" e-mail regularly. Please only send emails during working-hours.

University Statement on Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be accessed on the Provost's Office [website](#). Additionally, SLU-Madrid has posted its academic integrity policy online: <http://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics>. As a member of the University community, you are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions and appeals.

The professor will review these matters during the first weeks of the term. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Academic Dean of the Madrid Campus.

University Title IX Statement: Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX deputy coordinator, Marta Maruri, whose office is located on the ground floor of Padre Rubio Hall, Avenida del Valle, 28 (mmaruri@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 213) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX deputy coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the SLU-Madrid's Counseling Services on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 230) or Sinews Multiplettherapy Institute, the off-campus provider of counseling services for SLU-Madrid (www.sinews.es; 917-00-1979). To view SLU-Madrid's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address: <http://www.slu.edu/Documents/Madrid/campus-life/SLUMadridSexualMisconductPolicy.pdf>.

Students with Special Needs: In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to <https://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics/student-resources>.

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also must notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course. Please contact Disability Services at disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu or +915 54 58 58, ext. 230 for an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services. For more information about academic accommodations, see "Student Resources" on the SLU-Madrid webpage.

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.

PROGRAM AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS¹

Summary of the Course

The two central parts of the course correspond to the two major approaches to normative ethics, namely, consequentialism and deontology. Each of these two approaches is divided again into two different versions.

Consequentialism sees in the good or the evil that an action produces the measure of its goodness or badness. Depending upon whether we consider the nature of that which is good and bad in a narrow way as that which is pleasurable and painful or admit different kinds of what is good and bad in itself (as an end), consequentialism can be divided into *hedonism* and a broader view. The latter allows for different classes of what is good in itself and considers the goodness or intrinsic value of something as a certain kind of property in its own right. Accordingly, the exposition of consequentialism will be divided into the study of hedonistic utilitarianism, on the one hand, and the broader version of consequentialism, on the other hand. This broader version does not only consist in the claim that there are different kinds of things that are good in themselves but also in an account of what it means to be good or intrinsically valuable. Consequently, we will address the notions of goodness and intrinsic value in this context, although they pose problems that are not only connected to a consequentialist approach to morality. As a classical exposition of hedonistic utilitarianism we will focus on John Stuart Mill's text "Utilitarianism," whereas we will rely on Moore's text "Goodness as Simple and Indefinable" as a defense of the conception of goodness that is behind the broader version of consequentialism.

Deontology understands moral demands as founded upon the nature of interpersonal relations. These relations are considered to be the source of moral duty. This can be understood in two different ways. According to the deontology of W. D. Ross, different kinds of interpersonal relations are the source of different kinds of duties. Moral duty thus depends upon the content of interpersonal relations, in such a way that to different kinds of such relations correspond different kinds of duties. This material (content-based) and pluralistic account of duty is reached through a descriptive classification of the fundamental kinds of duty that we are acquainted with. However, this account leaves it open how the unitary nature of duty—if there be any—can be understood. Precisely at such an understanding is aiming the classical deontology of *Immanuel Kant*, who offers a detailed analysis of the very notion (or meaning) of duty, trying to reconstruct from this perspective the universal structure of dutiful action. Kant's approach is thus of the kind of a rational reconstruction based on conceptual analysis and addresses duty in terms of a universal and formal structure of action. Accordingly, the resulting conception of duty is monistic and formalistic. The discussion of these opposite accounts of duty (the one material, concrete, pluralistic; the other formal, abstract, and monistic) will focus especially on the question whether they are complementary or mutually exclusive and to what extent their opposition can be understood as resulting from a different methodical approach.

The question concerning the nature of moral rightness is closely related to the question of how to understand the binding character of morality in view of the tension between moral norms and self-interest. This problem—at a theoretical level surprisingly difficult—will be addressed through a detailed study of the text "The Ring of Gyges" from Plato in which the author seeks to formulate the question in a precise manner and describes how a possible answer could be given.

¹ All page numbers refer to the required text (see above).

Virtue ethics changes the focus of morality from the rightness of singular actions to *modes* of acting that encompass a multiplicity of actions and shape the mode of being of persons. The approach of virtue ethics will be studied in the final third part of the program and will be compared both to consequentialism and to deontology.

Note on the additional readings

Some reference to the additional readings will be included into the discussion of the five principal texts in order to provide a broader and deeper understanding of some crucial aspects. The knowledge of the additional readings is not required for the exams, but it is necessary to study *one* of these texts for the paper.

Note on the structure of the sessions

The sessions will consist partly in lectures, readings of selected passages, and discussions, but they will also be devoted to a variety of other learning-activities including the presentations of the summaries of the additional texts and an in-depth analysis of Plato's text "The Ring of Gyges."

First part: Consequentialism and the Nature of the Good

1. Hedonistic Utilitarianism

Mandatory reading: Mill: "Utilitarianism (241-253)."

Additional readings: Epicurus, "The good life" (552-557); Bentham, "Pleasure as the Good" (547-550); Hooker, "Rule-Consequentialism" (281-295); Taurek, "Should the Numbers count" (310-320); Rawls, "Classical Utilitarianism" (262-265).

2. Universal Consequentialism and Axiology

Mandatory reading: Moore, "Goodness as Simple and Indefinable" (96-102).

Additional readings: Moore: "Intrinsic Value" (G. E. Moore: *Ethics*, chapter VII, handout); Scheler: "'Higher' and 'Lower' Values" (extract from M. Scheler: *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, handout); Scanlon: "The Buck-Passing Account of Value" (598-607).

Second Part: Deontology and the Nature of Moral Duty

3. Duties and interpersonal relations

Mandatory reading: W. D. Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right" (410-417).

Additional readings: Plato, "Euthyphro" (125-134); Williams: "A Critique of Utilitarianism" (253-261).

4. *The universal nature of duty*

Mandatory reading: Kant, "Morality and Rationality" (327-242).

Additional readings: Velleman, "Reading Kant's *Groundwork*" (343-359); Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives"; Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie. Kant on Dealing with Evil" (360-376); Langton, "Maria von Herbert's Challenge to Kant" (377-386); O'Neill, "Between Consenting Adults" (786-802).

Supplement: Virtue Ethics as an Alternative Approach to Morality

5. *The nature of virtue and the nature of morality*

Mandatory reading: Aristotle, *The Nature of Moral Virtue* (433-445).

Additional readings: Martha Nussbaum, *Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach* (446-459); Thomas Hurka: *Virtues and Vices* (460-473); Rosalind Hursthouse: *Virtue Ethics* (514-524).

Complementary Study: Why is it Desirable to Be Moral? In-Class Reading of Plato, "The Ring of Gyges."

Throughout the course we will study this text in the classroom. It will be divided into two parts that will be related respectively to the first and the second part of the program. First midterm: Glaucon's discourse (7-10); second midterm: Adeimantus' discourse (10-13). This study will be relevant for the exams.

Mandatory reading: Plato, "The Ring of Gyges" (7-13).

Additional readings to "The Ring of Gyges": Thomas Hobbes, "Morality and Self-Interest" (23-33); Friedrich Nietzsche, "Beyond Morality" (474-488); David Gauthier, "Morality and Advantage" (34-42); Joel Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism" (14-22); Christine Korsgaard: "The Authority of Norms" (43-55).

Spring 2018 Course Schedule:

JANUARY

Miércoles 10	First Day of Classes
Sunday 21	Last Day to Drop a Class without a Grade W and/or Add a Class; Last Day to Choose Audit (AU) or Pass/No Pass (P/NP) Options
Friday 26	No Classes
	Application Deadline for Spring Semester Degree Candidates

FEBRUARY

Wednesday 14	Ash Wednesday Registration for Summer 2018 Begins
Thursday 22	No Classes (Winter Break)
Friday 23	
Tuesday 27	Professors' Deadline to Submit Midterm Grades

MARCH

Friday 9	Last Day to Drop a Class and Receive a Grade of W
Tuesday 13	DEADLINE FOR THE PAPERS
Thursday 15	Last Day to Submit Transfer Application for Fall Semester
Monday 26	<i>Semana Santa</i> Holiday (Campus Closed)
Tuesday 27	
Wednesday 28	
Thursday 29	<i>Jueves Santo</i> (Campus Closed)
Friday 30	<i>Viernes Santo</i> (Campus Closed)

APRIL

Wednesday 4	Registration for Fall 2018 Semester Begins
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MAY

Tuesday 1	<i>Día del Trabajador</i> (Campus Closed)
Wednesday 2	<i>Día de la Comunidad</i> (Campus Closed)
Thursday 3	Spring 2018 Final Day of Classes
Wednesday 9	FINAL EXAM: 15:30
Friday 11	University Housing Move-out Date
Saturday 12	Commencement
Sunday 13	Professors' deadline to submit spring 2018 final grades